

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 15- Luke 15:11-32

268- The Son of Man Has Come to Seek and to Save
That Which is Lost- Part 6

December 28, 2014

Luke 15:11-32

11 And He said, "A man had two sons.

12 "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.

13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him.

17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;
23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;
24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.
25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.
26 "And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be.
27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'
28 "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.
29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;
30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'
31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.
32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.'"

To the Glory of God

Now this is the sixth and final installment of our examination of the 15th Chapter of Luke. And I really don't think I have done an adequate job of explaining all that is in these Parables- so I pray that you will use what we have learned in this small mini-series as a guide to go even deeper into what Jesus said here.

Now as I told you in the beginning- this entire Chapter consists of three Parables- given one right after the other- that all say the very same thing. These are three Parables that answer the grumbling of the Pharisees in the second part of verse 2 when they said:

Luke 15:2b

... This man receives sinners and eats with them.

And so all three of these Parables are designed by Jesus to explain *why* Jesus sat down and ate with and spent time with tax collectors and those who were sexually immoral- people that the Pharisees condemned and wrote off- precisely because they were so wicked and blatantly evil people.

And we have been investigating just what Jesus meant in these three Parables because there is so much confusion about this subject in our day. For example, some teach that Jesus ate with these people because He was saying that it really didn't matter that the tax collectors had betrayed their own people, and that these other people were sexually immoral. But, if that is true- then are we to assume that we should betray the people of the Church and be sexually *immoral*, too- so Jesus could spend time with us? Is *that* the message of these three Parables? I don't think so.

Others teach that Jesus was saying that we should not object to anyone being sexually immoral or betraying their own people- which is similar to the first one. But, if that is true- then why does the Bible teach in so many places that sexual purity and being faithful to the Church is honoring to God?

Still others claim that Jesus was so against "the establishment" that He showed His disdain for all organized religion by rebelling *against* whatever the Pharisees were *for*. But, if that is true- then why are there so many Commands in the Bible that say that it matters *what* we believe and *why* we should believe it?

May I suggest to you that none of these scenarios are true, and Jesus taught these three Parables in order to show three very important Divine Truths about God and Man:

1. God Loves and Forgives as an Essential Part of His Nature and Character
2. The Only People Who Can be Saved are Those Who Have Been Gifted by God to Know that They Are Lost and Are Great Sinners, and Who Know That They Are in Great Need of Both Grace and Mercy- Which Cannot be Earned and Which God is Not Obligated to Give

3. God Looks to Chosen People- Regardless of the Depth of Their Sin- and Will Move Heaven and Earth to Save Them- While Resisting and Rejecting the Self-Assured and Self-Righteous

So Jesus gave three Parables:

- ✓ The Parable of the Lost Sheep (**Luke 15:4-7**)
- ✓ The Parable of the Lost Coin (**Luke 15:8-10**)
- ✓ The Parable of the Lost Son (**Luke 15:11-32**)

... because they are in *ascending* order of clarity and distinction- so the more Jesus spoke- the more direct and pointed He got- until by the time he got to verse 32- everybody who heard Him on that day came away with the last part of the third aspect:

God will resist and reject all of those who are self-assured and self-righteous as it pertains to knowing and understanding their own lost condition and their great need for Forgiveness and Salvation and Righteousness, and who think that they can do something to make themselves attractive to God, or that God is in any way obligated to forgive or save them.

Now look again with me at **Luke 15:13-19**:

13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him.

17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

So Sovereign Election does *not* teach that only blond haired and blue eyed people can be saved, or that only people who are descendant from a certain ethnic group can be saved, or that only people who adopt a certain moral code can be saved, or only those who participate in certain religious ceremonies and rituals can be saved.

No, Sovereign Election teaches that all those who have been *gifted* with the ability to understand their own lost condition like this young man in this Parable, and the tax collectors and prostitutes whom Jesus ate with can be saved. And they can be saved- regardless of their sinful condition at the present hour.

Sovereign Election does *not* teach that the requirement for Salvation is partaking of Communion or being Baptized or speaking in tongues or walking down an aisle or human decision. No, the requirement is that the person must be chosen by God. And the result of being chosen by God is *not* that the individual won't be sinful- he may be horribly sinful as the young man in this third Parable- but rather that everybody who is elected for Salvation will be *granted* by God with the ability to see that he is a great sinner, and that sin is horribly offensive to God, and that because God is infinitely Holy and Righteous- God is proper and correct to eternally damn all sin and all unrepentant sinners.

Sovereign Election gives *everybody* who is chosen the power and desire to grieve over their sins and repent. Because without honestly and truthfully *grieving* over your sin and *hating* your sin and *turning from* your sin- the Bible says that you will die in your sins. Sovereign Election provides *everybody* who is chosen with eyes to see that they cannot do *anything* to *earn* or *deserve* forgiveness, and it *reveals* to *everybody* who is chosen that God is in no way obligated to forgive or save them.

In other words- sinful people- from every walk of life and who come from every nation on earth- Jew or Gentile, male or female, young or old- who have been graced by God to be deeply and profoundly troubled over their own sinful condition are those whom the Holy Spirit is dealing with. And all whom the Holy Spirit is dealing with will be genuinely convicted. And all who are truly convicted in a Biblical sense and are not simply trying to get out of a jam- are those who are being sovereignly drawn to Jesus. And all who are sovereignly drawn to

Jesus will come. And all who come- Jesus will receive. And all of those whom Jesus receives- He will wash and cleanse and forgive and save to the uttermost. And all who are saved will be empowered by God the Holy Spirit to follow and obey God- not perfectly but honestly. And all who follow and obey Jesus will enter into Heaven to dwell in Heaven with indescribable joy- forever.

And here's the kicker. Here is the most unbelievable part- the part that angered the Pharisees so much- the part that all true Muslims and all true Buddhists and all true Hindus and all true Jews reject- this will happen- these people will be saved- *regardless* of how evil and wicked and dirty these people might be right now. And so the beauty of Sovereign Election, the beauty of Justification by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone, the beauty of Biblical Christianity is that it doesn't matter how bad you have been and it doesn't matter how far away from God you are and it doesn't matter how long you've been in the hog wallow- God the Holy Spirit will operate as, what Charles Spurgeon called, "The Hound Dog of Heaven", and He will find you- and no matter where you are and no matter what you are doing- and in that moment- you will do what Jesus said in **Luke 15:17** says and you will **"Come to Your Senses"**, and you will *immediately* "know" and "believe" and "understand" two very important things:

- A. You Are a Great Sinner
- B. God is a Great God

And in some form or fashion- you will say to yourself what this young man said in **Luke 15:18**:

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight

... precisely because at this point- you have *already* experienced the miracle of the new birth- even though you have not yet repented and you are not yet justified, and you do this because you have *already* received within yourself the new divine nature, and you act like this because you have *already* had the seed of Jesus Christ inserted within you, and you say these things because you have *already* been given eyes to see and ears to hear and heart to believe, and the only thing that matters to you now is the Father, and your own sin that dishonors the

Father and that separates you from the Father. But look at something real important in **Luke 15:18-20a**:

18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."'

20 "So he got up and came to his father..."

So this young man is convicted by God the Holy Spirit, and notice several qualities that tells us whether this is a genuine Holy Spirit conviction over sin or just somebody trying to get out of a bad situation where as soon as the situation changes- they go right back into sin again.

- ✓ The convicted person realizes the depth of his own sin (**Luke 15:18**)
- ✓ The convicted person does not care what else may happen to him- all he wants is forgiveness and to be close to Father (**Luke 15:19**)
- ✓ The convicted person cannot bear being distant from the Father (**Luke 15:20**)

But as true as all that is- Jesus is now going to illustrate all over again that Salvation is a Sovereign Act of God Alone- and *cannot* be accomplished by human determination or human choice or human action. Look again at the last part of verse 20:

Luke 15:20b

... But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

So *before* the son could ever leave his distant country of sin, *before* the son could ever get to the Father, *before* the son could- by his own power- come to the Father- the Father did five things- all by Himself:

1. The Father saw the lost son
2. The Father felt compassion for the lost son
3. The Father ran to the lost son
4. The Father embraced the lost son

5. The Father kissed the lost son

Now this is exactly what was prophesied by the OT Prophets concerning how the New Covenant would work. For example, in **Jeremiah 31:31-34** the Bible says:

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

And in **Ezekiel 36:23-27**

23 "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

So even though it is true that genuine Holy Spirit conviction will *always* make the sinner *want* to get close to God, and even though true Holy Spirit conviction will *always* cause the sinner to *want to try* to

bridge the gap between himself and God by what he does for himself- those who are truly saved- will be saved- only because God sovereignly came to them- not because they came to God. Remember Jesus said in **Luke 19:10:**

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

... and remember that the Apostle Paul taught in **Romans 3:10-12:**

**10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO
SEEKS FOR GOD;
12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME
USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN
ONE."**

... and here the Apostle was quoting King David from **Psalm 53:1-3** who said:

**1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," They are corrupt, and
have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good.
2 God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is
anyone who understands, Who seeks after God.
3 Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.**

Now David says here under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit that God Himself looked from Heaven upon the sons of men (that's us) to see if there was *anyone* in their fallen condition who "understands" (conviction) or if there was anybody who sought after God on his own accord- absent the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And what did God find? What conclusion did God Himself come to? What was the answer to the question?

Psalm 53:3

**Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.**

You see, the Fall was so devastating and so radical and so all-encompassing that it destroyed not only our love for God and separated us from God- which would have been bad enough. But the Fall went on to completely obliterate both the *desire* and the *ability*- the *will* and the *power* that we had before the Fall to even seek God for help.

So without God sovereignly *intervening* on our behalf, without God sovereignly *interrupting* our plans and *inserting* Himself into our lives, and without God *forcing* Himself upon us, and without God *violating* the stew out of our will- *nobody* would ever be convicted, *nobody* would ever repent, and *nobody* would ever be saved.

So coming to God for Salvation is not hard, it isn't difficult- Jesus taught and all the Apostles taught and all the OT Prophets taught that Salvation is absolutely *impossible*- absent a sovereign Move of God toward the lost sinner *before* he is saved and *before* he even wants to repent.

And God set it up this way on purpose to completely nullify any human effort at coming to God on our own terms and in our own power and on our own timetable- those qualities that exalt the so-called "free will" of Man and diminish the Sovereignty of God. I tell you that the will of lost Man is not free and never has been, and so that simply does not exist- and never has. Turn with me to read what Paul said about this in **Ephesians 2:8&9:**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Now read what the Apostle John said about this very issue in **John 1:11-13:**

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,

13 who were born, not of blood (natural descent) nor of the will of the flesh (human decision) nor of the will of man (husband's will), but of God.

... or what Jesus Himself said in **John 15:16a:**

You did not choose Me but I chose you...

... or what the Apostle Paul taught in **Romans 9:11-16**

11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose (to save all of His elect) according to *His* choice (Election) would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

12 it was said to her, "***THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.***"

13 Just as it is written, "***JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.***"

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice (Human Fairness) with God, is there? May it never be!

15 For He says to Moses, "***I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.***"

16 So then it (Salvation) *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but (Salvation depends solely) **on God who has mercy.**

Now what is amazing is that these Pharisees knew all this. But their false religion had blinded them to the point where not only did they *not* see- they were now so deep into deception that they didn't even *want* to see. And Jesus knew this.

So notice that when the lost son gave his prepared speech to the Father in verse 21- the Father completely ignored all that the son said that he was going to do to try to make it up to the Father- not because it isn't good in some sense- to want to try to make it up- but simply because we *cannot* make up to God for the fact that we have sinned against Him, and really- even *trying* to do something to make it up to God- belittles the Father and the majesty of His Grace.

So look what Jesus says the Father did *to* the son and *for* the son after the Father had already done everything to go get the son and bring him back to the Father in **Luke 15:22-24**:

22 "***But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;***

23 ***and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;***

24 ***for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'*** And they began to celebrate.

And this is the very same theme of celebration that runs through the other two Parables. The Parable of the lost sheep:

Luke 15:5-7

5 "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the lost coin:

Luke 15:9&10

9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'

10 "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

But now notice something very different about this third Parable about the lost son that is unique from the other two Parables. The first two Parables end with the great celebration, and Jesus makes it clear both times that He is *not* talking about either a sheep or a coin but is talking about lost people who are chosen by God to be saved and who prove that they are chosen by the fact that they repent.

And so we are correct to say that one aspect of Sovereign Election that is always true is that those who are chosen by God from before the foundation of the world to be saved- will repent.

And by "repent" I mean- not that they will say "*I'm sorry*", but rather that they will be genuinely *sorrowful* about their sin. Quickly turn with me to read **2Corinthians 7:10**:

For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

So from this we see that there are two kinds of "sorrow":

- A. The kind of "Sorrow" that is according to the Will of God
- B. The kind of "Sorrow" that is of the world

And notice that the Apostle teaches here that the "sorrow" that is "of the world" *produces* death, while the "sorrow" that is according to the Will of God *produces* "repentance", and this "repentance" leads to "Salvation".

Now the English word, "sorrow" comes from the Greek word that means: *pain; grief; and used with persons in mourning*. And notice that this "sorrow" comes *first* and that this sorrow is not the repentance itself. And then notice that this "sorrow" *produces* or *brings forth* or *results* in a repentance of sin or a turning away from sin that is based upon a change of mind. And then notice that God's Word says that this "turning away from sin" leads to true and genuine Salvation.

So without the godly sorrow- the grieving that is according to the will of God- there will be no genuine repentance and without repentance- there will be no true Salvation.

And this is what is missing in the theology of the modern Church. In fact, many church leaders today teach that it is actually wrong and unchristian to even suggest that people should grieve over their sins- even though the Bible says that this grieving and this mourning produces real and genuine repentance which leads to eternal Salvation.

And so Jesus is teaching us here that this younger son grieved over his sin, he was broken over his sin, he mourned over his sin. And that is great and wonderful because that leads to true Salvation. But now we have to make clear that the Father running to the son to embrace and forgive and kiss and receive him was not *caused* by the son's repentance. Rather the son's sorrowing and repentance was *caused* by God- Who chose to save this son before he was ever born.

Okay, we got that. But now notice that this third Parable doesn't end with the celebration that the younger son has been empowered by God the Holy Spirit to repent and has now been mercifully forgiven and saved by what the Father sovereignly does for him- while all heaven rejoices.

No, this third Parable now switches to the re-action to all of this by the older son. Read again **Luke 15:25-32** with me:

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 "And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be.

27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

28 "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.

29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.'

32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.'"

Now here is a question that we need to ask. If the only reason Jesus gave this third Parable was to drive home the Glory of God's Grace in saving undeserving sinners like He did in the first two Parables- what was the point of Jesus giving these additional 8 verses? If all that Jesus wanted to do here was to underscore that He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and that all heaven rejoices at the saving of a single sinner- why did He then end this story with the older brother's re-action to what the Father had graciously done?

It makes no sense to end this Parable with this sad and sinful reaction by the older brother- unless Jesus was doing *two* things here instead of just one:

- ✓ Demonstrating the Glory of God's Grace toward *undeserving* sinners who repent by saving them
- ✓ Demonstrating the Glory of God's Righteousness toward *unrepentant* sinners by rejecting them

And the key to understanding *why* Jesus added this terrible ending to this Parable lies in us understanding what the real issue was

with the Pharisees. Jesus says in verse 29 that the initial first natural and normal re-action by the older brother to the Salvation of his younger brother was not celebration- but anger. Now why was that?

We don't pick this up too easy in our day for a number of reasons:

- ✓ We are Western in our mentality
- ✓ We are 2,000 years to the right of the Resurrection
- ✓ The correct emphasis that Christianity places on the Grace of God
- ✓ Our almost complete banishment of the issue of God's Righteousness in Salvation

God established a Divine Precedent about Himself way back in the beginning when He said to Moses in **Exodus 34:6-7**, when God Himself said

6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

And then God repeated this again in **Numbers 14**. So this laid the foundation of the mentality of the Jew to this day that sinners must be punished. All sin must be punished, and God would be unjust to allow even one sinner to get away with the evil that he has done. Later on- the wisest man in the world- King Solomon wrote this under the movement of the Holy Spirit in **Proverbs 17:15**:

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.

So God cannot simply forgive the sinner. The sin must be condemned if God is to remain Righteous and Just. And under the partial and shadowy Revelation of God under the Law- that meant that the sinner himself must also be judged. And so for thousands of years- all that the Jew sought after was to uncovering the guilty so he could be

punished. As soon as they knew somebody was guilty of sinning- they stoned him or cast him out or put him to death so that God would not damn the whole city or the whole nation.

And in the warped mind of the unsaved Jewish leaders- the only people who could receive Mercy from God were those who *deserved* it, those who had done something to *earn* it, those who had modified their behavior to the point where at least you could say they were trying, and so God was now *obligated* to give it.

So to the Jew- God giving Mercy toward undeserving sinners was blasphemy. To suggest that God would forgive a wicked sinner based on nothing more than him confessing his sin and grieving over it and crying out to God for Mercy and trusting in the finished Work of the Messiah was tantamount to saying that God was a sap and that God was weak and that God Himself was silly, and that God Himself didn't care about vindicating His Own Righteousness by destroying the wicked. And I told you that this is what I call "The Jonah Syndrome".

But the glorious and completed Revelation of God in the New Covenant- which the Jews both then and now categorically reject- says that God will sovereignly forgive the sinner while punishing the sin itself so that the sinner may go free. And what allows God to do that and remain Righteous is that a sinless God/Man took on all our sins and substituted Himself to receive the full Judgment of the Wrath of God against our sins- so that God could show Mercy to us.

So the entire time that Jesus has been telling this third Parable- the Pharisees who were standing there on that day were getting madder and madder. And they were getting mad at the Father in this Story. For example- as Jesus told them that the younger son walked up to his father and demanded his "share" of the inheritance- the Pharisees were crinkling up their noses and saying to themselves, "*Humph! This younger son has no right! He has no legal right to anything that should go only to the first born son!*" But when Jesus said that the father actually sold his land and possessions to give the younger son his "share"- this was beyond the pale because the only legitimate response to the insulation of this wicked boy based on the Pharisees doctrine of condemnation was to either slap the boy across the face publicly to shame him, or cast him forth from the family completely, or take the boy out into the city square to be stoned to death. But when Jesus described the father's suffering of personal humiliation at the sinful

action of the younger son- the Pharisees didn't see the humiliation of God the Son in condescending into human flesh- they simply saw a weak and vacillating father who began to disgust them.

And when they heard Jesus tell them about all the trouble that the younger son was going through in his sin- the Pharisees weren't thinking, *"Good, maybe this will bring the son to repentance."*, as we do today under the New Covenant. They were thinking, *"Good, the evil sinner should suffer because of the way he has acted."*

When Jesus told them that the father saw the boy afar off and ran to meet him- the Pharisees didn't see the Kindness of God in running to the sinner precisely because the sinner could not run to God as we do under the glorious New Covenant. They were embarrassed that the father had humiliated himself by acted so undignified in running and showing his ankles and acting silly and foolish like some weak, emotional woman.

And when they heard Jesus say that the father ordered a feast to celebrate the son's Salvation- the Pharisees didn't see all Heaven rejoicing at the saving of a single soul. They saw people making light of the fact that God's Righteousness had been belittled and that even though the younger son deserved to die- they saw a weak father who- in their mind- had actually become more evil than the younger son. Now read the older son's argument against his father **Luke 15:29b&30** again with me:

29... 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

This is exactly what these Pharisees thought about themselves and God. So by the time that Jesus gets to the behavior and reaction of the older son- the Pharisees were so relieved that somebody was finally going to do what the father should have done all along. And they thought to themselves, *"Well, it's about time that somebody starts standing up for righteousness and start vindicating righteousness by not celebrating what God condemns."*

So while the Pharisees could not relate to either the younger son or the father in this Parable- they absolute were in full agreement with the older son. So when the older son gets angry and refuses to go into the feast in verse 28- the Pharisees were thinking, *"Yea- that's right!- I would be angry, too. The idea of this weak, silly father throwing a party to celebrate his sinful son! Why I would never do that!"*

And when Jesus tells them that the father goes out to plead with the older son- the Pharisees said to themselves- *"Look how weak this man is!"* Then the older son makes three different accusations against the father:

- ✓ I have been serving you for many years
- ✓ I have never neglected a command of yours
- ✓ You have never celebrated over me

... all of which were lies. The Truth is that God had judged the Jews over and over again throughout their history because they did *not* serve Him, and they broke *all* His Commandments *continually*. Right at that very moment-as these Pharisees were seething in their own self-righteousness- they were being brutally subjugated by the pagan Romans precisely because they had left off serving God many centuries ago. Now look at how the father responds to the older son in **Luke 15:31&32:**

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.*'"

The father tells the older son two very important things:

- You have always been with me
- All that is mine is yours

Now this is not an absolute statement by Jesus here. Jesus is *not* teaching that the angry, self-righteous son is right with God and that he will inherit the Kingdom along with the younger brother who was graced to repent. No, Jesus is simply saying that the Jew was the ones

who were always *associated* with God and that they are the ones who- above everybody else- *should* inherit the Kingdom. But now look closely at how the last verse begins:

But we had to celebrate and rejoice...

... in other words- it is correct and proper for us to celebrate and rejoice. Another way to say this is that it would have been wrong not to celebrate and rejoice. But *why* did they *have* to celebrate and rejoice?

... for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun to live*, and *was lost and has been found*.'"

... and this was the key to everything. In other words what Jesus is saying here is that by celebrating the Salvation of the younger son who has truly repented- we are coming into alignment with and we are upholding both the Mercy and the Righteousness of God. So as I told you two weeks ago- It is absolutely amazing that the one single Parable in all the Bible that gives such hope and that illustrates Grace and the Father's Love for His Own the best- is the very same Parable that incited the greatest degree of animosity and hatred from the religious elite. And, so, one of the things that you should take away from this Parable when we complete it is this:

What made the Pharisees despise this Parable the most and what brought forth the greatest degree of animosity toward Jesus Personally- was also the single greatest illustration of the Grace of God toward undeserving sinners

And this is the way it is with legalism, in general. Because legalists are trying so hard to earn their own righteousness by what they do for themselves- inherent in their legalism- is a *belittling* and a *minimization* and an outright *rejection* of the only real and true Cause of our Forgiveness and our Righteousness- and that is the Grace of God.

So here is something to take away with you today. Any religion that has animosity toward Grace is evil. Any teaching that produces jealousy and envy toward the recipients of the Grace of God is of the devil. Any Doctrine that denounces sinners as being too dirty or too evil to be saved is destructive, and any human philosophy that allows God's

Grace to be belittled or minimized or outright rejected is not good or noble or pure and should be soundly condemned, and any Belief that allows for a single person on planet earth to think for a single second that Grace is somehow *optional* for him and that he can make it to heaven and stand in God's Presence due to his own level of obedience or some display of human effort- is the very epitome of a doctrine of devils.

Now ending this Parable in this way is very strange. No other Parable leaves you hanging like this. It seems very similar to the way that God ended the Book of Jonah in the OT. It is a weird ending. It seems as though there was something else that needed to be said or done to make this Parable complete. And, in fact, that is the way that Jewish Parables normally went.

Jewish Parables normally had a storyline that ended with the punchline- but this one does not. This Parable ends with the pleading of the Father toward his other sinful older son over his anger that the father had forgiven and pardoned the sinful younger son- and then stops. But it doesn't tell us how the older son responded. So what should the ending be like?

Those of us who understand true genuine Biblical Salvation say that it ended with the older son realizing that he, too, was a sinner, and that he, too, should be damned, and that he didn't deserve anything either, and so repenting- he joined in with the celebration of the younger son's Salvation because the older son shared in Salvation as well. So is that how it should have ended? Yes, if the older son would have been chosen by God to be saved and would not have been self-righteous about his own condition.

But sadly- that is *not* how this Parable ends. This Parable ends very badly- precisely because the older son and the Pharisees were *not* chosen for Salvation from before the foundation of the world. And, therefore, they were *not* blessed by being convicted of the Holy Spirit about their own lost condition. And they were *not* graced by God to sorrow over their own sins. And they were *not* granted the gift of repentance. They did not have an ear to hear or an eye to see and they didn't have a heart to believe. God had not put His Spirit within them to cause them to love Him and obey Him. And God did not wash them with clean water, and Jesus did not wash them in His Blood. And, therefore, the older son in this Parable- who represented the Pharisees

in real life- never did repent and he never was forgiven and he never saw Salvation.

There was no need to vocally end this Parable because by the time Jesus got to this point- every Pharisee knew exactly what He was talking about. And so as Jesus gave verse 32- He was looking straight into the eyes of thee self-righteous legalists and with their noses flaring in anger and with them seething in hatred- He was telling them the very same thing that he told Judas on the night in which He was betrayed,

“What you do- do quickly”

Every Pharisee there that day- hearing this Parable from the Lips of Jesus knew exactly what the reaction of the older son should have been. In their minds- the ending would have been that upon hearing about the Grace and Mercy of the father in forgiving and pardoning the unworthy younger son- the older son- moved by a demonic legalistic understanding of the Righteousness of God that was not obtained by faith in Jesus Christ, but a Righteousness that had to be earned- found a large stick and picked it up and- in the name of upholding the dignity and holiness of God- beat his father to death.

And as the father lay dead in a pool of blood- the Pharisees knew that older son should have gone into the house and stopped the celebration and then forbade anyone to even mention the Grace and Mercy that the father had shown. And this was exactly what these very same Pharisees did just a few years from this very moment as they drug out the Apostles of the Lord into the courtyard and beat them and forbade that they even mention the Name of Jesus again.

And that is exactly what was going through the minds of these Pharisees as they heard Jesus give this Parable. And as I told you earlier- the Parable of the lost sheep *irritated* the Pharisees, the Parable of the lost coin deeply *bothered* them. But this Parable of the lost son made these religious hypocrites mad. This Parable- the one that so thrills our hearts and illustrates the Glory of God's Grace the best- was- to the Pharisees- Jesus throwing down the gauntlet and confronting them with their own wickedness. Now they must go way beyond discrediting Jesus and trying to trap Him. Now Jesus must die.

And in just a few months from Jesus telling this Parable here in **Luke 15**- these very same men will fulfill their place as the older son in this Parable as they will find a large piece of wood and they will nail the feet and hands of the incarnate God to the Cross. And as they hoist it up in the air- they will finally feel vindicated as they seek to murder the very Grace and Mercy of God in human flesh and the only Way to the real true Heavenly Father.

And so it is with us today. The very Message that exalts the Grace of God toward undeserving sinners the most is the very Message that is maligned and ridiculed and rejected and condemned the most. And as God draws undeserving sinners to Himself through the miracle of the New Birth and receives them into His Kingdom amidst great celebration- God is at the same time- rejected all those who refuse to bow and who refuse to bend and who refuse to repent.

So which son are you? Are you the son who will become angry at the Sovereign Salvation of God or the one who will receive it? Are you the one who will confess his great need for Forgiveness and Salvation and Righteousness and beg God for a Mercy you don't deserve and a mercy that God is not obligated to give, or will you be the one who foolishly thinks he has earned it? Will you be the one who rejoices at the majestic display of God's Grace- knowing that you desperately need it, or will you be the one who outwardly says that you are all about the Righteousness of God- while all the while knowing that you don't have it?

I plead with you to come to Jesus today and receive His Forgiveness and hear all of Heaven rejoice!

Amen. Let's pray